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SUBJECT: RECENT STUDENT ACTIVISM--A CAUSE FOR GOP CONCERN

SUMMARY: THE WEEK OF MAY 19-23 HAS BROUGHT A SHARP RETURN IN PANAMANIAN STUDENT ACTIVISM. WHILE THE LARGEST STUDENT ORGANIZATION, THE FEDERATION OF PANAMANIAN STUDENTS (FEP), REMAINS FIRMLY IN THE GOVERNMENT CAMP AND ON ITS GOOD BEHAVIOR, THE SMPL RADICAL ANTI-GOP REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT FRONT (FER) HAS AGAIN CAUSED PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT. A MAY 19, FE-LED MARCH BY NATIONAL INSTITUTE (NI) STUDENTS DEMANDING URGENT GOP ACTION ON PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT AT THE INSTITUTE BLOCKED DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC FOR SEVERAL HOURS, PROTEST WAS RESOLVED ONLY WHEN MINISTER OF EDUCATION ROYO WHO WAS OBLIGED TO ACCOMPANY STUDENTS BACK TO THE NI, ACCEDED TO SOME OF THE STUDENT DEMANDS. ROYO ALSO TOLD THEM HOWEVER, THAT FUNDS WERE NOT AVAILABLE TO TAKE CARE OF ALL THEIR GRIEVANCES. AND, ALTHOUGH SCHEDULED MAY 22 COMMEMORATION OF 1958 STUDENT RIOTS WENT OFF QUIETLY, SECONDARY STUDENTS TODAY (MAY 23) HAVE STAGED DEMONSTRATION AT LOCAL LEFTIST ANTI-GOP RADIO STATION. THE MAY 19 INITIATIVE PROMPTED IMMEDIATE EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR THE GOP FROM THE FEP AND FREP (THE PRO-GOP REFORM FRONT OF PANAMANINA

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TEACHERS) AND ACCUSATIONS OF REACTIONARY PLOTTING.

CONTROL OVER THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, ALWAYS A CONCERN, IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO THE GOP AT PRESENT STAGE OF CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATION. WHILE TORRIJOS HAS NO WISH TO USE FORCE, SHOULD RADICAL ANTI-GOP STUDENT GROUPS INTENSIFY THEIR AGITATION, THE GN MAY YET HAVE TO GET ROUGH. END SUMMARY

1. STUDENT ACTIVISM, NOT GREATLY IN EVIDENCE HERETOFORE THIS YEAR, WAS DECIDEDLY ON THE INCREASE THIS WEEK ON MAY 19, SEVERAL HUNDRED STUDENTS FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE (PANAMA CITY'S LARGEST AND MOST PRESTIGIOUS PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL) TOOK TO THE STREETS TO PETITION THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION FOR NEEDED REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO INSTITUTE FACILITIES. DEMANDING URGENT GOVERNMENT ATTENTION TO THEIR PETITION, THE STUDENTS MARCHED TO THE NEARBY EDUCATION MINISTRY, BLOCKING TRAFFIC IN THE CITY'S BUSY COMMERCIAL CENTER FOR SEVERAL HOURS WITH GARBAGE CANS AND OTHER OBJECTS.

2. ALTHOUGH OTHERWISE PEACEFUL, THE STUDENTS, LED BY THE RADICAL REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT FRONT (FER), WERE REPORTEDLY IN A MOOD NOT TO BE DENIED. REFUSING TO ACCEPT A MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION ARISTIDES ROYO AT THE MINISTRY, THE DEMONSTRATORS DEMANDED--AND ROYO AGREED--THAT THE MINISTER RETURN WITH THEM TO THE INSTITUTE TO HEAR THEIR COMPLAINTS AND INSPECT CONDITIONS. AFTER WALKING BACK TO THE SCHOOL WITH THE STUDENTS, IN THE RAIN, ROYO HEARD OUT THEIR GRIEVANCES AND PROMISED PROMPT GOVERNMENT ATTENTION TO THEM, ALTHOUGH HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT FUNDS WERE NOT AVAILABLE TO SATISFY ALL THEIR REQUESTS. ON MAY 21, ROYO WENT HURRIEDLY TO COLON TO LISTEN TO SIMILAR COMPLAINTS FROM THAT CITY'S ABEL BRAVO SECONDARY SCHOOL.

3. THE MAY 19 FER-INSPIRED NATIONAL INSTITUTE MARCH, THE FIRST MAJOR STUDENT DEMONSTRATION THIS YEAR, HAS THE GOP CONCERNED AND HAS PROMPTED QUICK REACTION FROM GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED STUDENT AND EDUCATIONAL GROUPS. THE REFORM FRONT OF PANAMANIAN TEACHERS (FREP) ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE MAY 20 EXTOLLING THE GOP'S PROGRESSIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHARGED THAT REACTIONARY ELEMENTS, OPPOSED TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE TORRIJOS REVOLUTION, WERE ATTEMPTING TO PROVOKE A CONFRONTATION WITH THE GN IN ORDER TO GENERATE DISORDER AT TIME WHEN THE GOP IS ENGAGED IN DELICATE PHASE OF CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATION. FREP ALSO ALLEGED THAT CERTAIN STUDENT SECTORS WERE BEING "CONFUSED" BY LEADERS WHO "ACT AS REVOLUTIONARIES" AND WHO HAVE PROVOKED DISUNITY

WITHIN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT. THE FEP WARNED EDUCATORS TO BE ALERT AND CALLED FOR UNITY OF POPULAR FORCES WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE FEDERATION OF PANAMANIAN STUDENTS (FEP), IN ITS MAY 20 COMMUNIQUE, VOICED SIMILAR WARNINGS OF ANTI-GOP MACHINATIONS BY REACTIONARY FORCES AND POINTEDLY ENDORSED THE TORRIJOS REVOLUTION, EDUCATIONAL REFORM, AND MINISTER ROYO. CITING CONEP SPECIFICALLY, FEP CHARGED THAT "LOCAL REACTIONARIES"--ENCOURAGED BY "INTRANSIGENT" POSITIONS ASSUMED BY "U.S. CIRCLES" ON CANAL TREATY ISSUE--WERE STEPPING-UP THEIR EFFORTS TO INTRODUCE ANARCHY IN THE ECONOMY, DIVIDE THE POPULAR FRONTS, AND CREATE CONFUSION AMONG THE PEOPLE. THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PDP), ACCORDING TO MILITARY INTELLIGENCE REPORTS, IS CONCERNED BY STUDENT UNREST AND IS ATTEMPTING TO ASCERTAIN WHO IS BEHIND IT.

4. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE STUDENTS' MAY 19 DEMONSTRATION, THE LONG-SCHEDULED MAY 22 STUDENT COMMEMORATION OF THE MAY 1958 ANTI-GOVERNMENT STUDENT RIOTS (IN WHICH SEVERAL STUDENTS WERE KILLED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD) TOOK ON SUDDEN IMPORTANCE. THE COMMEMORATION ACTIVITIES WENT OFF CALMLY, HOWEVER, AND ACCORDING TO THE PRESS AND OBSERVERS PRESENT THERE WAS NO COMMOTION OR OVERT ANTI-GOP OR ANTI-U.S. MANIFESTATIONS. SOME STUDENT PARTICIPANTS REPORTEDLY SHOUTED "TO THE ZONE", BUT NO MOVEMENT IN THAT DIRECTION MATERIALIZED. THE ORDERLINESS EVIDENT ON MAY 22 APPEARS TO HAVE GIVEN WAY, HOWEVER, AS SECONDARY STUDENTS TODAY (MAY 23) HAVE DEMONSTRATED, CAUSING SOME DAMAGE, AT ANTI-GOP, ULTRA-NATIONALIST RADIO IMPACTO. THE STATION WAS FORCED OFF THE AIR FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR BUT RESUMED BROADCASTING WITH THE DEMONSTRATION STILL IN PROGRESS. RADIO IMPACTO ALLEGED THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE STUDENTS--REPORTEDLY FROM THE DOLORES MOSCOTE SECONDARY SCHOOL--WERE BEING ORCHESTRATED BY THE CIA; THE DEMONSTRATORS CHARGED THAT THE CIA WAS USING THE STATION FOR ITS PURPOSES.

5. COMMENT: THE FER, AN ANTI-ALMOST EVERYONE (FEP, GOP, U.S., PDP) RADICAL LEFTIST GROUP, IS DOMINANT AMONG STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAY 19 INITIATIVE. IT HAS STAGED DEMONSTRATIONS PREVIOUSLY--THE AUGUST 1974 (INCLUDING STONING OF THE EMBASSY) JANUARY 9, AND AGAIN MAY 1--WHICH HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AGAINST BOTH GOP AND U.S. THE GOP, THROUGH THE GN'S G-2, HAS THE FEP UNDER CONTROL BUT HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN SIMILARLY SUBORNING THE FER. WHILE THE FER REPRESENTS A MINISCULE PORTION OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, ITS ABILITY TO CREATE UNTOWARD

INCIDENTS IS CAUSING THE GOP CONCERN. THE GOP HAS
NO DESIRE TO USE FORCE AGAINST PANAMANIAN STUDENTS,
REGARDLESS OF THEIR AFFILIATION, AND IS PARTICULARLY
SENSITIVE TO MAINTAINING STUDENT SOLIDARITY WITH THE
GOVERNMENT DURING THE TREATY PROCESS. SHOULD THIS
WEEK'S RENEWED STUDENT ACTIVISM INTENSIFY, AND
ATTEMPTS TO PENETRATE AND CONTROL THE ANTI-GOP GROUPS
FAIL, THE GN MAY YET HAVE TO GET ROUGH.
JORDEN

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